

The Alliance is Finished!

If Skywalker is Lost, The Alliance is Finished!

Mon Mothma and the leaders of the New Republic watch with growing despair as their democratic order crumbles under the savage attacks of the Emperor's reunified and enhanced forces.

Suddenly the truth is clear: unless the order of Jedi Knights is reestablished throughout the galaxy, there is very little likelihood that the Alliance will ever succeed in liberating the galaxy from the grip of the dark side!

As the last fully realized Jedi Master, Luke Skywalker is the most important key to the rebirth and restoration of the Jedi Knights.

Luke must be found at all costs.

Nar Shaddaa, A Lawless Derelict World

Nar Shaddaa -- the "smugglers' moon" -- orbits Nal Hutta, one of the principal planets inhabited by the worm-like Hutts, the race of gangsters that fathered the formidable Jabba.

Thanks to complex criminal pacts with the Empire, the Hutts have long ruled the Galactic smuggling trade. Thus it followed that numerous smuggling groups working for the Hutts were permitted to establish preserves on the ancient spaceport moon. Chief among these "smuggling guilds" (as they like to call themselves) are the Corellians -- including many of Han Solo's former companions in piracy.

There is a continual buzz of traffic between Nal Hutta and its moon and the far-flung star systems of the galaxy. Great transgalactic transports and medium-sized freighters come and go. The sleek and garish caravels of the Hutt ganglords, the beaten and rusty craft of the bounty hunters pass the *Falcon* as it glides in over clusters of miles-high docking towers -- each a complex self-contained city topped by spaceport facilities. These once noble constructions have surrendered to pollution and decay, creating the specter of a spaceport moon bathed in gloom and glittering with lights...

Down Among The Corellian Pirates

A great grid interconnects and overlays the upper reaches of these individual megalopolises...a massive decaying complex of docking, warehouses, and refueling facilities.

Each level of the spaceport has landing pads and hangar bays, as well as freight depots and warehouses...not to mention gaudy old thoroughfares that cut horizontally through the whole edifice.

Most of the inhabitants of this "hive of villainy" live and deal at the upper layers, among the ruined port facilities... But there are glowing fires below, and a sub-life that thrives in the deepest spaceport canyons.

Indeed, descend to the foundations of this world, and you will find the very dregs of galactic civilization: regressed and inbred remnants of a humanoid race that once ruled Nal Hutta, a thousand years in the past. Driven from their homeworld by the insatiable Hutts, they have found grim survival in the deep underworld of the spaceport moon, feeding on the refuse that falls from the city heights.

Mako Spince -- Han Solo's Classmate at the Imperial Academy

Because of wide variations in metabolism among the multitudinous races of the galaxy, age alone has never been a deciding factor in recruitment to military service. A healthy constitution, a sharp mind, and political influence were all it took for Mako Spince, the son of an important Senator, to gain admission to the prestigious Imperial Academy. Thus; although Mako is about ten years older than Han Solo, Mako and Han were classmates, in the years before the Clone Wars.

But Mako proved less than officer material. While Han went on to graduate with honors, Mako bent and broke the rules at every turn. Eventually he got himself expelled for what he called a "silly prank": He stole a gram of anti-matter from the school physics lab and used it to blow up the Academy's "mascot moon" -- a barren rocky sphere in high stationary orbit over the Academy, emblazoned with the Academy's official seal!

So Mako "graduated" two years before Han... And when Han was eventually banished from military service, for a crime he did not commit, it was Mako who introduced him to the pleasures -- and profits -- of the smuggler's trade!

As a smuggler, Mako would take any risk, if the money was right. In fact he was renowned, in the prime of his life, for making some of the riskiest smuggling runs in the Galaxy. But eventually his luck ran out, and he was crippled in a bloody run-in with NaQoit bandits in the Ottega system. Forced into semi-retirement as a traffic controller on Nar Shaddaa, he now keeps an eye on ships entering and leaving the Corellian sector.

It's Mako who gives Han the good news: The highest clan of Hutts -- the brothers of the gangster Jabba, following their father Zorba's failed attempt at revenge -- have put an absolutely huge price on the heads of Leia and Han for the death of Jabba.

Shug Ninx -- Another Cohort From the Wild Youth of Han Solo

This isn't a world where people come out to meet you... Once you're let through the shields (when they're working), you are on your own. If you are transporting contraband, you will know your warehouse destination -- and your confederates will be waiting there. If you are just coming in for a good time, there are many places to berth your ship and many swindlers who will be happy to take your money.

Han punches up the corn-code of Shug Ninx, a half-breed Corellian master mechanic whose mother was a Theelin, one of the now extinct near-human races.

Han and Ninx go back a long way -- to the time when Han knew Lando Calrissian. In the wild years that followed his banishment from Imperial military service, Han was a freebooter living from deal to deal. Between smuggling runs he'd often as not stay on Nar Shaddaa, gambling at the sabacc tables and staging hotdogging space races with his friends -- Lando Calrissian and Shug Ninx.

Ninx was more undisciplined than Han and Lando -- if that's possible. But he was also older, and took a protective interest in "the wild kids," as he called them. It was Ninx who taught Han and Lando how to tear down a hyperdrive...and how to get the most parsecs out of a third-hand Modog power coupling.

In his mature years Shug Ninx runs a ship repair facility famed far and wide for working miracles on junkers nobody else will touch. Access to Ninx's "spacebarn" is strictly controlled by Ninx.

Ninx's secure entrance to his repair facility is the chute -- a square tunnel about a mile long. Its opening is masked by a huge hologram and its entire length is protected by lateral-firing turbolasers.

This unusual piece of architecture is a discarded prototype for a section of the unfinished second Death Star -- rescued by Ninx from an industrial junkyard in Bonadan.

With great difficulty -- and enthusiasm -- Ninx disassembled "the chute" and dragged it half-way across the galaxy, installing it in an abandoned layer of the Corellian sector of Nar Shaddaa.

His reasons? Ninx makes a lot of money servicing ships belonging to wealthy Hutts. And a growing segment of the population of Nar Shaddaa is surviving by stripping expensive fixtures and accessories from the space vehicles of the rich!

Salla Zend and the *Starlight Intruder*

Ninx's garage is cluttered with disassembled space vehicles of all sizes and configurations. Beat-up vintage airspeeders and sleek star cruisers disgorge confused masses of electronic plumbing and conduit. Parts and tools are everywhere, whole subassemblies hanging from lifts and cradles. Grease-spattered alien mechanics struggle with ancient hyperdrives, tuning the old systems to near-new specs.

The *Falcon* soars under a very large freighter webbed in a tangle of scaffolding. Perched high on the scaffolding is somebody else Han used to know, giving off bright splashes of light with her ion-flow welding torch...

The ship is the *Starlight Intruder*, and the welder on the scaffolding is Salla Zend. The *Intruder*, a cobbled together monstrosity, a fantastic "flying junkheap," was pieced-together by Salla Zend from parts scavenged from all over the galaxy. Not a beautiful ship, but one that will be well-able to transport immense loads at faster-than-light speeds, once it is finished... if it ever is!

Han met Salla back when they both ran spice to the Stenness System. They had a friendly competition -- seeing who could make the Kessel run the fastest...and who could cut the best deal with the tight-fisted 'Nessies. Between runs Han and Salla became an item, spending a lot of time together.

They'd known each other three years when Salla's navicomputer malfunctioned and she dropped out of hyperspace on collision course with a neutron star.

Han managed to save her -- but she lost her ship and was left badly shaken by the experience. Overnight Salla was of a mind to get married and settle down -- with Han Solo.

In those days, Han Solo viewed marriage as a one-way ticket to the gas mines... Either that, or he must have sensed someone else in his future. Whatever the case, the galaxy is a big place, and it's awfully easy to say goodbye to somebody and never see them again...

Until today.

Salla Zend remains unattached, making a good living as a welder and gun-runner. Leia has to wonder if Salla harbors any left-over feelings for Han Solo.

In the Turbulent Streets of the Vertical City

The streets of the maze-like Corellian city are gaudy with lights and holo-displays, crowded with smugglers and aliens and bounty hunters... even the occasional party of Imperial stormtroopers.

The city population also includes a class of mendicants, former smugglers and freebooters who long ago were reduced to sleeping in doorways and begging for coins. Han and Leia are making their way through the turbulent streets, toward Han's old living quarters, when they bump into one of these unfortunates, an old woman squatting in the gutter surrounded by all her belongings.

The old woman is VIMA-DA-BODA, a 200-year-old fallen Jedi.

The Fall of a Jedi

For nearly a hundred years Vima-Da-Boda was an illustrious woman warrior, fierce in the cause of justice. During that time she raised one daughter, Neema, whom she taught the Jedi path.

Unfortunately her daughter fell in with a group of rebellious young Jedis who gradually seduced her to the dark side of the Force. Then, further defying her mother's wisdom, Neema betrothed herself to an Ottethan warlord, ruler of twelve systems on the far perimeter of the galaxy.

When her barbaric husband proceeded to treat her like chattel, Neema (as was her nature) attempted to use the dark side against him -- and failed. He threw her in chains. Through the Force, the poor girl called to her mother from afar. Vima made haste to the ruling Ottethan system -- but she was too late. The savage warlord had fed Neema to the rancors that run freely in the Ottethan forests.

For the first time in her life, Vima gave way to rage. Confronting the warlord, she cleaved him in half with her lightsaber. Then, pondering the death of her only daughter, she gave way to despair.

So it was that Vima-Da-Boda began to lose her connection to the Force. Finally came the time of the great purge, when the Emperor and his henchman Darth Vader unleashed the extermination of the Jedi. Consumed with fear for her life, Vima further disowned her heroic past, and hurled herself down among the lost.

As Vima tells Leia, during that dark time nearly everyone was hunted and nearly everyone was killed. But Vima, impoverished and forgotten, was among the overlooked. As Leia can clearly perceive, the Force is still active in Vima-Da-Boda, but covered by a great shadow.

And Vima can see the Force in Leia. Indeed, a great communication takes place between the two women, on a level that Han Solo cannot perceive. In the moment of Vima's confession, it is as if the fire of the Jedi, long smoldering in the old woman, leaps forth of its own accord, adding itself to the power already active in the younger Jedi.

Without a doubt, Leia Organa has not seen the last of Vima-Da-Boda.

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